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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued February 17 to report on the aftermath of President Chen Shui-bian's Lunar New Year's Day proposal to abolish the National Unification Council, and the controversy sparked by a KMT advertisement Tuesday which for the first time the party's inclusion of Taiwan independence as a possible option for the Taiwan people to choose for their future. Coverage also focused on the U.S. arms procurements and other local issues. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "[The Decision to] Abolish the National Unification Council and National Unification Guidelines Will Be Moved Ahead and Made Within February." The newspaper also carried a news story by Washington correspondent Nadia Tsao on its second page with the headline: "United States and Taiwan Get Closer for Communicating about [Chen's] Proposal to Abolish the National Unification Council." The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" quoted DPP Chairman Yu Shyi-kun in its front-page story as saying that the DPP's version of Taiwan's new constitution will touch upon issues such as Taiwan's national flag and national title. The pro-status-quo "China Times," however, ran an exclusive interview with former DPP Premier Frank Hsieh on its second page in which Hsieh welcomed KMT Ma Ying-jeou's move to include Taiwan independence as a possible option for the Taiwan people.

In terms of the U.S. arms procurement issue, all major Chinese-language dailies in their inside pages reported on a piece in "The Journalist" magazine in which Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng revealed that President Chen has accepted his suggestion to follow the results of the 2004 referendum in that Taiwan will not push for the procurement of PAC3 missiles for three years.

2. Most papers continued to editorialize on KMT Chairman Ma's discourse on cross-strait relations. A "Liberty Times" editorial urged the United States to put Taiwan's mainstream public opinion and political reality into consideration when defining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. Wang Kun-yi, associate professor at Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies, defended President Chen in an opinion piece in the limited-circulated, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" by saying Chen is following his own logic when he proposes to abolish the National Unification Council and people should not oversimplify his actions. A "China Times" editorial, on the other hand, pointed out that Ma failed to address China's human rights situation and democratic reforms when he talked in Europe about his position regarding cross-strait relations. An editorial in the

limited-circulated, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" strongly urged the KMT to remain committed to the pursuit of reunification with China and not to waltz to the tune set by President Chen. End summary.

A) "`Maintaining the Status Quo' - `[KMT] Joining Hands with the Chinese Communist Party to Restrain Taiwan Independence' - `Ultimate Unification [between Taiwan and China]'"?

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (2/17):

". In fact, [Taiwan's] mainstream public opinion is very clear now. For a majority of Taiwan people, Taiwan is Taiwan; China is China; and one country on each side of the Taiwan Strait is the authentic political reality. In other words, when the United States said it is opposed to any attempt by either side of the Taiwan Strait to change the so-called `status quo,' it obviously should take Taiwan's mainstream public opinion and the political reality across the Taiwan Strait, not the `status quo' defined by China or Washington, into consideration. That way the stability across the Taiwan Strait can be maintained, and as a result, Taiwan will not feel that it is confined and forced to tilt toward China. In fact, the `status quo' defined by Taiwan includes `maintaining the status quo' and `[Taiwan] independence' because the two options both reject China's annexation [of Taiwan]. The only difference is that the first option is `independence in substance but not in name,' while the latter seeks `independence both in deed as well as in name' - that is, whether it is doing something like carrying a signboard [with the words] the Republic of China or publicly wearing the national title of Taiwan, the island's status quo is that it is an independent sovereign state. It is China's aggressiveness [stemming from its desire to] annex Taiwan and its [missile] deployment that are the evil roots that attempt to unilaterally alter the

status quo. The United States should strongly stop and oppose [China's attempts], or the Taiwan Strait and the Asia-Pacific area will become turbulent and there will never be days of peace. ."

B) "President Chen Knows Just What He Is Doing"

Wang Kun-yi, associate professor at Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies, noted in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (2/17):

"In fact, Chen's call to abandon the unification discourse is built on the same foundations as `one country on each side of the strait' - namely, on the presence of a military threat and Taiwan's own democracy. The threat refers to the missiles that China has aimed at Taiwan, while democracy is a call for all Taiwan people to have a say in deciding their own future. .

"And again, if the [U.S.] arms procurement act is passed, there will be the chance of a US-Taiwan alliance to resist the threat of China's missiles. If abandoning the unification discourse can be tightly bound together with a commercial alliance of Taiwanese business interests and a military alliance with the US, then Chen will be able to step down in 2008 with the assurance of a job well done. So we should not oversimplify Chen's actions. He is following his own logic. After all, the fact that he has successfully prevented China, over six long and difficult years, from moving directly against him, proves that he know what he is doing."

C) "The Topics That Ma Ying-jeou Should Have Said but Failed to [During His European Trip]"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] commented in its editorial (2/17):

". Just because Ma has `said too much' about [his] position

on cross-Strait relations and issues regarding unification and independence, it appeared that he has 'said too little' regarding some topics, in particular, those about the human rights protection and democratic reforms inside mainland China. . In other words, if Ma believes that what mainland China needs most is continuous and progressive social and political reforms, and as he himself said in his speech [in London] that the KMT under his leadership is willing to make contributions for mainland China's progress and development, he then should have expressed more concerns about the current human rights and democratic conditions inside mainland China. . [Likewise], if Ma believes that democratic reforms on the mainland is one of the major conditions for cross-Strait interaction and even, ultimate reunification, in the future, he then should have not totally overlooked and said nothing about the recent events on China where freedom of speech was suppressed. ."

D) "KMT Must Stay Committed to Reunified China"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (2/17):

". The publication of the [KMT] ad was apparently aimed at countering the recent accusations from President Chen Shui-bian that the KMT, particularly Ma, is supportive of the rulers in Beijing. This smear tactic by Chen and his men is believed to have a considerable impact on voter support for Ma as a prospective candidate in the 2008 presidential election.

"Ma and other top KMT officials need not waltz to Chen's music. They must remember that the pursuit of reunification is a core value of the party. It is this ideal that has kept the party's backers together, than made them loyal supporters of the party. It is unwise to replace this stance with a dubious position for the purpose of wooing voters who favor independence. The KMT should remain committed to the pursuit of reunification and seek to convince independence supporters of the need for a reunified China."

KEEGAN